

[Personal History of Vital Martin]

ORIGINAL MSS. OR FIELD NOTES (Check one)

PUB. Living Lore in New England

(Maine)

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PERSONAL HISTORY OF VITAL MARTIN, FRENCH CANADIAN

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Mr. Martin is a French Canadian born on a farm "along the St. John Ree ver", in 1881. Is 57 years old. The nearest town to his parents' farm was St. Leonards. Lives with his wife. Couple never had any children, but entertain a lot.

Worked on the farm and in the woods in Canada. Went to Lille when he was 17 years old in 1898. Worked there 15 years mostly as a carpenter but sometimes in the woods. Moved to Old Town in 1913 and has remained here ever since. Went to school only two years in Canada between the ages 6 and 8. The small house in which he lives and the large corner lot on which it stands belong to the church. He is janitor of the church. He takes care of the fires in the convent school, the sisters' house, the church, and the priest's home; shovels paths and keeps ice off the roofs. Mows lawns and does other work about the church property in the summer time. The job keeps him pretty busy. Is a very fast and efficient worker. Good carpenter. Has never worked in a factory. Interested in local politics and local affairs. Is a Catholic. A little above medium height, slim, and dark. Has good teeth and a scar on his left eyebrow. Talks with a pronounced French accent in spite of his years in Maine. Smokes cigars.

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THE LIFE OF VITAL MARTIN, FRENCH CANADIAN

(As told by himself to Robert F. Grady)

"Dar wasn't any town where I was born. Just a lot of farms along de ree [ver?]. De St. John Ree ver. De nearest town was St. Leon ards, but dat was a small place. Jus' a few stores dere and a saw mill." (There was also a church and a small school.) "I don' remem ber moch about dat place. You ought to talk with som' of de ole fel lers - 75 or 80 years ole. Dey remem ber a lot of stuff, an' they talk right along.

"Dere wasn't moch work up dere. Dey work on de farm, in de saw mill, on de drive, an' in de woods. Dey pay \$12.00 to \$14.00 in de woods when I was dere. I remember my grand

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pere he's tole me she's hard one to work on de farm dere. Dey have de wooden harrow dat day make himself, and dey plow de ground wit' a wooden plow dat has something like galvanize ir on on de point to make him sharp. Rich farmers dat have de money can get metal plows, dut de poor one he have to make it himself.

"I remem ber once I help a farmer to harv est some oats. He have a wag on he make [nimself?] with two wheels on it an' a rack to hole de oats. You can carry a lot of [hoats?] in one of dose rack. He use de ox en to haul de cart. Bimeby he put two more wheels on de wag on [an'?] make de rack bigger. Dats de way dey got started on de farms. Dey raise beans, peas, corn, wheat, oats, an' pork. We make our own clothes from de cloth we make on de hand loom. I used to wear de moccasins dat my father make.

"Dey can go bunting and fish ing any time dere because dey was no war den. Did you ever see one of dose ole gun an' how dey load 'im? Dey put some pow der in de hand an' dey pour it down de bar rel an' dey 2 put in a piece of wors ted an' poke 'im down with a ram rod. Den dey put in de ball an' another piece of wors ted an' dey shove 'im down some more with de ram rod. She's fire with a cap. Dere was lots of wold wild game dere an' bears. Just one shot is all we need to kill de bear. If we don't kill him de first time, he get away for it take so long to load de gun. I remem ber my grand pere tole me, he say, "Vital, [shnot?] de bear just once: dat's enough to kill Him." I nevair hear of anyone kill by mistake, up dere. Me, I don't like to go out in de woods to hunt here. because it is too danger ous. You nev er can tell when someone will kill you for someting else. I wouldn't want to go back dere, doe. Dis is a moch better place. When I first came to Hole town I work as a par pen ter. I get tree or maybe six dollar a day, but dere is not moch work in de winter time, an' I have to go on de woods. Dis job is steady the year around, an' she's not hard. I have a little garden dere an' I Keep de hen.

"De work is moch easier now for de wo mans. She have de washer, de Frigidhaire, an' de elecric light, an' she have de wa ter on de sink. Yes sir, de worl has improve very moch since I live in Cana daw.

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